

**TEACHING OF GRAMMAR: TEACHERS' BELIEFS,  
INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXTS AND PRACTICES**

**BY**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations were used in this study.

Abbreviations	Refers to
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ETEMS	English in the Teaching of Maths and Science
KBSR	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (Integrated Curriculum for Primary School)
MTDP	Malaysian Trainer Development Program
UPSR	Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (Overall Assessment Test For Primary School)
BI	Background Interview
GBI	Guru Besar Interview (Interview with the School Headmaster/ Headmistress)
J	Journals
PD	Post-Observation Discussion
PI	Post-Interview
PrOD	Pre-Observation Discussion



# **PENGAJARAN TATABAHASA : KEPERCAYAAN GURU, KONTEKS DAN AMALAN PENGAJARAN**

## **ABSTRAK**

Walaupun minat terhadap bidang system kepercayaan guru dalam pengajian pendidikan umum telah bertambah pada masa kebelakangan ini, kepercayaan guru-guru ESL terhadap pengajaran tatabahasa dan pengaruhnya ke atas niat, tindakan dan keputusan mereka dalam amalan bilik darjah masih kurang diterokai. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi jurang pengetahuan yang terdapat disebabkan kurangnya penyelidikan dalam bidang yang tersebut. Lebih khusus lagi, kajian ini mengkaji kepercayaan lima orang guru ESL sekolah rendah terhadap pengajaran tatabahasa dan menyiasat kesepadanan dan ketidaksepadanan kepercayaan dengan amalan mereka. Kajian ini juga menyemak faktor-faktor kontekstual yang membantu dan menghalang penjelmaan kepercayaan kepada amalan, dan strategi-strategi penyesuaian yang digunakan oleh guru untuk menangani konstrain-konstrain kontekstual.

Pelbagai kaedah telah digunakan dalam kajian ini, termasuk temubual, pemerhatian dalam bilik darjah, perbincangan selepas pemerhatian dalam bilik darjah, penulisan jurnal dan analisis rancangan mengajar. Data dianalisis dan dikategorikan kepada tema umum dan corak. Tema utama analisis data menonjolkan perhubungan secara interaktif antara kepercayaan, pengetahuan dan konteks pengajaran dalam kerangka peribadi guru tentang pengajaran tatabahasa.

Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kelima-lima orang guru mempunyai set kepercayaan yang berbeza terhadap lima dimensi kepercayaan

yang dikaji: kepercayaan terhadap pelajar, tatabahasa, pembelajaran tatabahasa dan pengajaran tatabahasa. Pengalaman peribadi dan professional yang lampau, samada negatif atau positif didapati menyumbang kepada perkembangan kelima-lima dimensi kepercayaan ini.

Analisis kesepadanan dan ketidaksepadanan kepercayaan guru semasa peringkat-peringkat perancangan pengajaran dan pelaksanaan pengajaran menunjukkan tiga corak: sesetengah aspek kepercayaan mereka yang dipegang tidak diperlihatkan pada peringkat perancangan tetapi tindakan serta merta semasa pelaksanaan pengajaran adalah sepadan dengan kepercayaan mereka, sesetengah aspek kepercayaan mereka adalah tidak sepadan pada kedua-dua peringkat pengajaran dan sesetengah aspek kepercayaan mereka adalah sepadan dengan kedua-dua peringkat pengajaran. Kesepadanan-ketidaksepadanan kepercayaan dengan amalan dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor kontekstual yang wujud dalam persekitaran kerja guru-guru tersebut. Penyiasatan strategi-strategi penyesuaian guru untuk menangani konstrain-konstrain kontekstual menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru telah menggunakan strategi penyesuaian yang berbeza.

Bahagian perbincangan kajian ini memfokus kepada peranan utama kepercayaan guru semasa membuat tindakan pengajaran, keputusan dan mentafsir konteks pengajaran. Perbincangan juga memfokus kepada implikasi untuk menambahbaikkan pendekatan latihan, kandungan dan struktur kursus demi membantu guru-guru ESL pra-perkhidmatan dan dalam perkhidmatan untuk membangunkan teori-teori peribadi-praktik yang sah dan bersesuaian agar sepadan dengan reality alam pengajaran.

# **TEACHING OF GRAMMAR : TEACHERS' BELIEFS, INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXTS AND PRACTICES**

## **ABSTRACT**

Despite a recent increased interest in the area of teacher belief systems in mainstream education studies, the beliefs of ESL teachers about grammar and the influence of such beliefs on their intentions, action and decisions in classroom practices remain relatively unexplored. The present study seeks to fill the knowledge gap left by a scarcity of research in this area. More specifically, this study investigates five in-service ESL primary school teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and examines the congruence and incongruence of their beliefs with the classroom practices. It also examines the contextual factors that support and impede the translation of beliefs into practices, and the accommodative strategies teachers adopt when coping with contextual constraints.

Multiple methods were used in the investigation including interviews, classroom observations, journal writings and analysis of lesson plans. Data were analysed and categorised for common themes and patterns. The central theme of the analysis highlights the interactive relationship between beliefs, knowledge and instructional contexts in teachers' personal framework of teaching grammar.

The findings revealed that the five teachers have different interrelated sets of beliefs related to the five belief dimensions under study- beliefs about learners, beliefs about language teachers, beliefs about grammar, beliefs about grammar learning and beliefs about



grammar teaching. Previous personal and professional experiences both negative and positive were found to contribute to the development of the five belief dimensions.

Analysis of congruence and incongruence of teachers' held beliefs during instructional planning and implementation stages of teaching revealed three patterns: some aspects of their held beliefs were not reflected at the planning stage but their instantaneous actions during instructional implementation were congruent with their professed beliefs, some aspects of their held beliefs were incongruent at both stages of teaching, and some aspects of their held beliefs were congruent at both stages of teaching. The congruence-incongruence of beliefs with practices is influenced by contextual factors in their work settings. Examination of teachers' accommodative strategies in coping with contextual constraints revealed that teachers adopted different accommodative strategies when responding to different aspects of contextual constraints.

The concluding discussion addresses the important role of teacher beliefs in making sense of teaching actions, decisions and interpreting instructional contexts. It also addresses the implications for improving training approach, course content and structure to help pre-service and in-service ESL teachers to develop valid and coherent personal-practical theories that match with teaching reality.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Overview

There has been an on-going debate about grammar in ESL teaching and in studies of L2 acquisition. The inconclusive debate about the best way to teach grammar has significant influence on the development of language teaching practice. As a result, different views, approaches and methodologies to grammar teaching have emerged for ESL teachers to choose to suit their own learners and classroom environment. However, *“the methodological proposals in pedagogic grammar for teachers are often implicit rather than explicit”* (Corder, 1988; p.127). The absence of clear guidelines about teaching of grammar particularly in situations when *‘the contexts and environments within which teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled’* (Nespor, 1987; p. 324), have led teachers creating their own personal theories about how to approach grammar in language classroom (Borg, 1998; 2003). These personal theories are derived from their belief system.

Teachers’ personal theories are formulated and reformulated as they go through the stages of teacher development. Their personal theories become the basis for their personal knowledge about teaching and therefore, as posited by many researchers, they have strong influence on teachers’ planning, instructional decisions and classroom practices (Lortie, 1975; Olson, 1981; Clark & Peterson, 1985; Bandura, 1986; Clandinin, 1986; Corder, 1988; Tobin, 1990; Fullan, 1991;

Freeman, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Cuban, 1993; Golombek, 1998; Roberts, 1998; Andrew; 2001). Since beliefs shaped teachers' personal knowledge and beliefs consist of matter of opinions, judgment and significant past episodes, it explains how and why different teachers have different reasons for selecting a particular content, different emphasis on the same content, different styles of teaching and different modes of learning.

### **1.1 Grammar in ESL Teaching - The Theoretical Background**

Grammar according to Rutheford (1987) is "*a necessary component of any language teaching programme*" (p.9), and thus plays an important role in language teaching. However, the focus on grammar in language teaching was challenged with the emergence of teaching methodologies based on different learning theories, Such a challenge influenced not only the content and the curriculum in language teaching, but also the implication for teaching grammar. Thus a fresh look at grammar was necessary causing linguists and language educators to rethink the status of grammar in language teaching and learning. This led to a constant debate among language educators and linguists regarding the nature and type of grammar instruction, which affected the understanding of how second languages should be taught or learned.

The advent of communicative language teaching has a tremendous impact on the way language should be taught and learned. It is a turning point for linguists and language educators to seriously review the role of grammar in language teaching (Celce-Murcia, 1991). This is because there are two different views about teaching grammar, that is, explicit and implicit grammar teaching

(Howatt, 1984). The conflicting views about how grammar should be taught is generally vacillated between language analysis and language use.

The Communicative Approach to language teaching emphasizes on meaning and how language is used or the functional aspects of language. This emphasis leads to the implication that grammatical accuracy is less important in communication (Garett, 1986; Woods, 1995). However, *communication can generally be achieved most efficiently by means of grammatical sentence or by a series of such sentences logically related*" (Close, 1991; p. 14), implying the important function of grammatical competency in communication.

In general, although researchers and language educators differ in giving emphasis toward grammatical competency, they all share the same view that grammatical competency has its important role in the development of communicative competence. Hence, three issues emerged related to the role of grammar in language teaching. Firstly, how teachers teach grammar in the classrooms in ways which avoid formalism "*without losing sight of the fact that grammar is systematically organised*" (Carter, 1990; p. 117). Secondly, how teachers decide and find ways of teaching grammar "*which recognize that appropriate and strategic interventions by the teacher are crucial to the process of making implicit knowledge explicit*" (ibid). Lastly, how to cope with the incompatible relationship of grammatical specification in a language syllabus with the nature of language acquisition (Rutherford, 1987) This is because grammatical items in the syllabus are carefully selected, ordered, and tabulated reflecting a linear and straightforward process of displaying language items to be

taught, while language acquisition is not a linear and straightforward process “*but a cyclic one, even a metamorphic one*” (ibid). The stages and time for each learner to learn or acquire certain aspect of grammatical constructs vary with age and personality.

Some of these issues and concerns led to further research in the field of second language acquisition and second language teaching. The controversial views regarding the extent of grammar instruction within communicative approach need to be resolved. As a result of different views about grammar in language teaching, many methodological proposals to the teaching of grammar emerged. However, those proposals have no clear or well-defined guidelines about how grammar should be taught.

## **1.2 English Language Teaching in Malaysia – A Contextual Background.**

The changes of method and methodological approach to teaching language in the West have also influenced the language teaching approach in Malaysia. In Malaysia, The English Language Program for the primary school is aimed at equipping students with basic language skills to enable them to use the language and communicate effectively in any situation (Wan Mohd Zahid, 1998). This aim is clearly stipulated in the English Language Syllabus. In an effort to “*to equip pupils with basic skills and knowledge of the English language so as to enable them to communicate, both orally and in writing, in and out of school*” (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran KBSR, Bahasa Inggeris Tahun 2, 1998; p. 1), English language teaching is based on the Communicative Approach. As communication can be achieved by means of grammatical sentences or series of

sentences logically related (Close, 1981), then the importance of grammatical competency in communication cannot be undermined. Hence, English language teachers are entrusted with a task of helping learners to acquire grammatical competency apart from communicative competency and proficiency if the aim of English Language Program is to be achieved.

The implication is, English language teachers have the responsibility to develop in learners the knowledge and skills of grammar. Within the Communicative Approach to language teaching, these teachers need to adopt 'appropriate' and 'effective' methods and strategies to teach grammar in English language classrooms. But what is considered 'appropriate' and 'effective' remains elusive as teachers are not given well-defined guidelines in the English Curriculum Specifications on how to approach grammar teaching, whether it should be done explicitly or implicitly.

The absence of well-defined guidelines as to whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly is probably influenced by the emerging language theories about the role of grammar in the Communicative Approach, which is still debatable and inconclusive. The ill-defined guidelines on how to approach grammar teaching in the English Curriculum Specifications, consequently, entail teachers making their own interpretations of the syllabus and of how to teach grammar. Their subjective interpretations and perceptions of the syllabus are influenced by their assumptions and personal beliefs about the nature of grammar and its learning and teaching, the role of learners and teachers as well as the context of teaching. The differing views and conceptions of grammar and

its teaching and learning lead to different views of what the essential skills of teaching grammar and different approaches to teaching grammar.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem.**

The common issue which has emerged from the theoretical and contextual background of this study is, there is no well-defined approach to the teaching of grammar. This is due to the different views of grammar in language teaching. The different language teaching approaches, which emerged over the years have placed different emphasis on grammar in language teaching. When new teaching approaches emerge to rectify the inadequacy of the previous approach, teachers who are the implementers of the new teaching approach may reserve their views and perceptions about teaching grammar according to the previous teaching approaches. This is especially so when teachers are advocates of the previous teaching approaches either through their experience as language learners or language teachers. These views and perceptions will shape their beliefs about English language teaching, which will subsequently influence their planning and instructional decisions.

As noted by Nespor (1987), teachers will rely on their beliefs when they are confronted with “*ill-defined and deeply entangled situations*” (p. 324) within their work setting. The absence of well-defined guidelines about how to teach grammar is one of the instances, which have led teachers to create their personal knowledge about teaching grammar in language classroom. Central to this personal knowledge is their beliefs.

Within the communicative approach of language teaching, there are claims that paying attention to grammar explicitly will impede the effort to achieve communicative competence. At the same time there are also claims that paying too much attention on communication and less on grammar will “*develop a kind of irremediably inaccurate fluency*” (Garrett, 1986; p. 133).

Due to these paradoxes, teachers are split into two groups with different views of grammar within the Communicative approach (Howatt, 1984). The first group believes that students will develop all the grammatical competence from exposure to rich comprehensible input from the environment. This group supports the implicit grammar instruction to language teaching. The second group believes that explicit grammar instruction is necessary to ensure that learners understand how grammar functions in communication. Both groups, however, do not reject that learners need to acquire or learn grammar, but the controversy lies in how to teach grammar. The arguments for and against explicit grammar teaching have put teachers in an uncertain situation about how to approach grammar instruction in a communicative language classroom.

The learning environment context in Malaysia also contributes to the dilemma teachers are facing in deciding which approach to adopt. The advocates for implicit grammar teaching believe that learners will acquire the structure of grammar through in- context comprehensible input (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). This means that the environment should provide an extensive target language input for a learner to subconsciously acquire the grammar structure of the language. But in some parts of Malaysia, especially in rural areas, the local



environment does not provide opportunity for students to subconsciously acquire the language. The non-English speaking environment lacks language input and does not give the right model of language input.

Also, for a student to communicate effectively as stipulated in the aim of the English Language Program, he or she needs to attain both fluency in the language and grammatical accuracy “*for maximally effective communication will lead back to work on accuracy*” (Brumfit, 1980). Although the communicative approach focuses on fluency, one cannot be fluent without some degree of accuracy. So, teachers are left to decide how to help students to achieve accuracy and at the same time promote fluency.

Time frame for learners to internalize a particular grammar structure is also another factor teachers have to consider when considering implicit grammar approach. If grammar is to be subconsciously acquired through in-context comprehensible input, some learners may take a relatively longer time to internalize a particular grammar structure. That also depends on the amount and quality of their exposure to the language.

But, if teachers were to choose to teach grammar explicitly, then there is a tendency that teachers may overly place focus on language practice more than language use. Although all language use is the result of language practice, “*not all language practice is language use*” (Brumfit, 1980; p. 125). Since language practice is often concerned with accuracy, teachers may give emphasis on drills. In Brumfit’s model of communicative approach, drills can be practised if necessary, but the condition ‘if necessary’ is too subjective and it depends on the

teaching environment. Teachers may interpret the situation differently as teaching situations may differ from one teacher to another.

Also, if teachers were to teach grammar explicitly, then there is a high tendency that teachers will focus on grammar explanation. But focusing on grammar explanation may take time away from acquisition activities. Although grammar explanation can serve as input for acquisition, the focus on grammar should be restricted to situations where it will not interfere with communication (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Again this highly requires teachers' own experience or personal knowledge to decide and make judgment under what and in which 'situation' to call for grammar explanations.

The explicit and implicit approach to grammar teaching and learning have their own strengths and weaknesses and teachers are left to decide within the two ends of the continuum their stand on approaching grammar in communicative language classroom. But in selecting or choosing the appropriate approach to grammar teaching, teachers will draw on their beliefs. Their beliefs related to English language teaching determine and justify what they choose to teach, how they teach and why they teach the way they do. These beliefs will take the form of personal knowledge or personal theory.

#### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

In a rapidly changing environment, teaching has become a multifaceted endeavor enacted within the dynamic context of student, curriculum and situation interactions. Hence, teachers are often faced with complex, ambiguous teaching and learning problems which require analysis, interpretation,

judgment and creativity to make decision for actions. But social phenomena in a teacher's work setting proliferate and most of the time, teachers are caught in situations that constrain options and require immediate and intuitive responses. This was the recurring theme that the researcher had drawn from 'teachers' voices' each time she conducted training sessions for a different group of in-service teachers. This has invoked some esoteric questions pertaining to the relevance and viability of the present teacher education curriculum and programs in preparing teachers to face the uncertainty and complexity in teaching situations. Will the existing training modules which emphasized on 'how to do' rather than 'why' to teach in a given way bring effective changes to their teaching approach? If so, then why do teachers, after attending a series of in-service courses still practicing the old ways of teaching? If teachers are trained on 'how to do', then why do teachers who had attended the same in-service course teach differently? These are some of the questions that have triggered and initiated the researcher's interest to conduct a study on teachers' personal theories. It seems that the existing training modules implicitly conceptualize teachers' knowledge-base as merely consisting of professional knowledge, hence giving less emphasis, if there is, on teachers' personal knowledge.

However, the findings from this study are not intended for generalization, that is, making generalization from 'sample to population'. This is because each case is unique and the instances of actions in each case are nested in natural context which differs from settings to settings. Nevertheless, the insights gained from the findings can trigger and inspire practitioners to reflect on and re-

examine their own teaching practices in light of the issues and concerns raised in each case. Since the case consists of accounts of the informants' 'lived experience', the instances drawn from the case can heighten their awareness about the significant role of teachers' personal theories in influencing their teaching actions and decisions. This awareness can further serve as a guide to their own personal and professional development. In addition, the findings can provide a database of materials which can be useful for theory-building

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine ESL in-service teachers' beliefs, contextual constraints and practices in relation to teaching grammar. Therefore, the following objectives guide the aim of the study.

- i) To identify teachers' pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning grammar.
- ii) To identify the source of their beliefs
- iii) To examine how their held beliefs influence instructional planning and instructional implementation in classrooms.
- iv) To examine the contextual factors that constrain or promote the enactment of held beliefs about teaching and learning grammar into teaching practices
- v) To investigate how teachers cope with teaching environment where their beliefs are incongruent with the beliefs embedded in their work settings.

By utilizing complementary methods in a research design for optimum effectiveness in the study of beliefs, it is hoped that this study will render research findings in a form that would convey the pivotal role of teacher's beliefs in guiding their teaching practices.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Research questions in the qualitative approach guide the focus and direction of the issues to be investigated. The questions help to frame the aspects or domains that the researcher is interested to explore. There is a possibility that in the process of investigating the issues under study, some pertinent questions may arise in the course of the study. Hence *“research questions may be formulated at the outset or later on, and may be refined or reformulated in the course of fieldwork”* (Miles & Huberman, 1994; p. 23). As noted earlier research questions serve as a guide to the study undertaken, therefore, it is hoped that the following research questions will guide the researcher to explore and investigate the phenomenon under study.

1.6.1 How do English Language teachers' pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning grammar influence their teaching practices?

- a) What are the pedagogical beliefs of the EL teachers about teaching and learning grammar?
- b) Where do these beliefs originate?
- c) How are these beliefs shaped?

1.6.2 How are these beliefs reflected in their classroom?

- a) What are the beliefs teachers would consider when planning teaching and learning activities?
- b) To what extent, these beliefs are reflected in classroom practices?

1.6.3 How do contextual factors influence the transformation of beliefs into practices?

- a) What are the probable contextual factors that influence the transformation of beliefs into practice?
- b) What are the coping strategies teachers would adopt in coping with situations where their beliefs are incongruent with the beliefs embedded in the social setting?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that this study will be beneficial in many ways. First, participants in the study will benefit immediately from the experience of reflection. Second, the findings of the study will contribute information to educators with information to help determine curricula and program direction. Third, studies on teachers' beliefs specifically with regard to grammar teaching are limited (Borg, 1998). Therefore, this study will provide additional information to the existing studies about teacher's pedagogical system of grammar teaching. Fourth, research findings have claimed that beliefs influence interpretation of tasks and goals definition as well as their teaching and learning environment (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). This study will contribute to an understanding of how teachers' beliefs influenced the interpretation of their teaching environment and

how they use this interpretation to justify and guide their behaviors and actions. Fifth, this study can contribute some ideas about the effectiveness of teacher education program content in relation to second language teaching from the teachers' own perspectives and in their own language. Sixth, findings from this study will also help educators in general to understand the dynamics of belief and the importance of beliefs in teacher development. Lastly, this study might raise questions for future inquiry into beliefs.

### **1.8 Study Limitations**

This study focuses on teachers' beliefs with regard to teaching and learning of grammar in ESL, the origin of their beliefs, the relationship of their beliefs with classroom practices and the contextual factors that influence teachers in translating their beliefs. In examining their beliefs and its relationship with teaching practices, the limitations of this study are as follows:

- a) This study is limited to pedagogical beliefs with regard to teaching and learning grammar in ESL classroom.
- b) This study is limited to in-service primary school English teachers in Seberang Prai. Therefore, the findings of the study are not intended to be generalized to other primary school teachers in general. Indeed the findings may not apply beyond the actual participants in this particular study.

## 1.9 Definitions of Key Terms

**Beliefs:** Represented as individual personal knowledge, which are constructed from experience acquired through cultural transmission and serves as implicit theories to guide thoughts and actions (Pajares, 1992).

**Knowledge**, according to Kuhn (1979) is defined as an act of the subject on objects and only through constructive activity individuals develop intellectually, while **experience** according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995) is defined as "*the process of gaining knowledge or skills over a period of time through seeing and doing things, rather than through studying*" (p. 404). **Cultural transmission** is a process of socialization through enculturation where individuals assimilate cultural elements surrounding them; education is a purposeful formal and informal learning activity that aims to bring behavior to conform to the cultural requirement; schooling is a teaching and learning process that takes place outside the home (Van Fleet, 1979).

**Belief system:** The level of thought that defines reality and sets the agenda for the other thought processes of an individual (Nespor, 1987).

**Teaching:** An activity consciously undertaken in order that somebody should learn something (Langford, 1968).

**Learning:** Learning can be defined as "a relatively permanent change in an individual's knowledge or behaviour that results from previous experience" (Hamilton & Ghatala, 1994; p. 9).



**Practice:** a customary action or way of doing something (Morris,1973).

**Constraints:** something that limits or restricts one's freedom of action (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1984).

**In-service teachers:** Teachers who are practicing teaching at schools, colleges and/or universities.

**Pre-service teachers:** Student-teachers who are undergoing teacher training program at teacher training colleges and universities.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 of the literature review will discuss different views and assumptions about grammar and its role in major language teaching approaches. This is to establish an understanding on how and in what ways the assumptions about grammar and grammar teaching help to shape teachers' beliefs about teaching of grammar. Part II of the literature review will focus on the nature of beliefs, the formation of beliefs, the influence of beliefs on teachers' learning to teach, and the interaction of beliefs and practices.

In order to establish a meaningful discussion, this chapter will integrate the theoretical and research review. The purpose for the integration is to contextualise theory into practice and substantiate the theoretical claims. Therefore, to avoid repetition, this chapter will not include a separate section on research review.

#### **2.1 Part I: Grammar and the Role of Grammar**

The first part of the literature review is intended to review the following aspects:

- a) What is grammar?
- b) Types of grammar
- c) Approaches to grammar in language classroom
- d) The status of grammar in major language teaching methodologies

It is hoped that Part I of the literature review will shape a better understanding on the nature and function of grammar in communication and language teaching. In addition, the different views of grammar will help to establish the understanding on how language is analyzed, and its extent of influence in the teaching of grammar. The discussions on the different methods of language teaching which have emerged from the different views of learning a language will help to establish the understanding of the role of grammar in language teaching and learning. Since each methodology does not have the same view of grammar, then whatever method teachers choose to adopt will reflect their assumptions and beliefs about grammar. Learners' experience participating in language activities based on a certain methodology will in turn influence their perceptions and shape their beliefs about learning grammar and as they become teachers, this experience will form their personal knowledge about teaching grammar.

## **2.2 What is Grammar?**

Depending on one's theoretical orientation, different people define grammar differently. Leech *et al* (1982) view grammar as an important component that relates phonology and semantics, or sound and meaning. Huddleston (1988) sees grammar as consisting of morphology and syntax. Morphology deals with forms of words while syntax deals with the ordering of the words to form sentences. Hudson (1992) is in the opinion that grammar embraces any kind of information about words since there are no boundaries around grammar. Cobbett (1984) regards grammar as constituting rules and principles that help a person to make use of words or manipulate and combine

words to give meaning in a proper manner. It concerns with form and structure of words and their relationships in sentences. This means that as the word order or form in a sentence changes, the meaning of the sentence also changes.

## **2.3 Types of Grammar**

Woods (1995) outlines five different types of grammar: prescriptive and descriptive grammar, traditional grammar, phrase structure grammar, transformational- generative grammar and functional-systemic grammar. These five types of grammar illustrate different approaches towards analysis and description of language. Consequently, the different approaches reflected in each type of grammar influence the teaching of grammar.

### Prescriptive and descriptive grammar

Prescriptive grammar is when the correct use of language is prescribed by a set of rules. These rules are fixed. Unlike prescriptive grammars, descriptive grammars recognize that language is constantly changing (Quirk *et al.*, 1985). This means that certain utterances that were considered incorrect grammatically at one time are now accepted as correct. For example, the use of 'a few' and 'a little'. In prescriptive grammar, 'a few' determines count noun (a few students) and 'a little' is related to non-count noun (a little salt). Thus, we say 'few' students, 'fewer' students, 'fewest' students and 'little' salt, 'less' salt, 'least' salt. But today, the use of 'less' with count noun as in 'less' students is also accepted (Woods, 1995).

### Traditional grammar

In traditional grammar, syntax rather than semantics, is a central component of a language. In teaching the syntactic organization of the sentences, traditional grammarians have identified and defined eight parts of speech. The eight parts of speech identified are nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections. These different parts of speech make up a sentence.

Traditional grammarians focus on the relationships of words in a sentence such as subject, object, complement, adverbial, etc to show the different clause types like SV (She was screaming), SVO (She eats ice-cream), SVA (He has been in the room), SVOA (She keeps the books upstairs), etc. Traditional grammar is descriptive in the sense that it attempts to describe linguistic structures (Quirk *et al*, 1985). For instance, according to traditional grammar the basic structure of an English structure is subject + verb + object as in “ He drinks water ”. Language teaching based on the philosophy of traditional grammar will focus on the parts of speech.

### Phrase-structure grammar

Extending and developing the work of traditional grammar, phrase-structure grammar highlights the relationship of words and phrases in a sentence (Cook, 1991). It helps to understand how the structural relationships of words and phrases support the meanings, which we attempt to convey through language. This relationship is presented graphically using substitution tables, which have been widely used in basic grammar lessons. If traditional grammar

emphasises on the written form, then phrase structure grammar focuses on spoken form. Thus the practice of drills using substitution tables is an attempt to help learners master the structure of the sentence. Although it focuses on structure as it appears in language, the structure is presented without consideration of meaning and communicative function (Woods, 1995)

### Transformational-generative grammar

Like traditional and phrase-structure grammar, transformational-generative grammar also emphasises on syntax. In fact, it deals with syntax in greater details. If phrase-structure grammar shifts the perspective from individual word to the sentence, transformational generative grammarians are interested to explain how our mind generates sentences, that is, from intent to utterance (Radford, 1981). Transformational generative grammarians argue that innumerable syntactic combinations can be generated by means of a system of formal rules, such as, transformational rule (ibid). These transformational rules, which are based on the phrase structure and the tree structure transform phrase structures into other forms, like active to passive. The processes that transform active voice to passive voice do not only depict the grammatical relationships between the various constituents that make up the sentence, but also explain how individuals can produce numerous sentences, which they have never produced or heard before.

Chomsky (1965) sees language as a generative system not a close system; a construct, which accounts for understanding and producing infinite number of grammatical sentences. To him, grammar should describe a native

speakers' intuitive understanding of the language he or she uses. The term 'surface structure' and 'deep structure' are used to describe this intuitive knowledge. 'Surface structure' is the actual form of the sentence produced while 'deep structure' is an underlying form that is related to the meaning of the sentence (Radford, 1981). It is represented in the form of a hierarchical tree diagram to show the abstract grammatical relationship of the words and phrases within a sentence.

Chomsky (1965) established a system of formal rules known as transformational rules that specify how 'deep structure' is to be transformed into 'surface structure'. For example, in sentences *The postman was bitten by the dog* and *The dog bit the postman*. The first sentence is a transformation from the second sentence. Although both sentences have different grammatical structure, they essentially have the same meaning.

Chomsky's transformational grammar offers insights into features of language, which are important for language learning and useful for language teaching. Through transformational generative grammar exercises, which illustrate how the parts of a sentence can be rearranged, combined and substituted, learners can manipulate and play with language at the sentence, phrase, and paragraph level.

#### Functional- systemic grammar

Functional-systemic grammar concerns with making clear interaction between syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Halliday's (1985) functional-systemic grammar, which focuses on the functional aspect attempts to account for how

language is used. Utterances are viewed as some meaning whose expression will vary depending on the situation. Thus the semantics of the intended utterances as well as the relationship between the speaker and listener influence the choice of expressions.

The linguistic forms and language functions are related through a network. This network, which is called a system network, organizes co-occurrence potential of grammatical types showing which types are mutually compatible, and which are incompatible (ibid). In simple term, this system network consists of choices of expressions of various kinds depending on the social context. For example, in greetings, there is a system network consisting a set of possibilities of which one is chosen: *How do you do?*, *Hello*, *Hi*, *What's up?* and *Good morning/ Good afternoon/ Good evening*. Depending on how the speaker evaluates or assesses the whole context including the relationship with listeners and their current state of feelings, he or she chooses one from these expressions. Likewise, a sentence, *To whom did you give this book?* and *Who did you give this book to?*. Both sentences are grammatically correct but depending on the social context and the relationship between speaker and listener both are used in different situation. We usually use the former in a formal situation and the latter in an informal situation.

Functional –systemic grammar approaches the language from the semantic point of view, precisely the semantic functions of the linguistic forms. If transformational generative linguists are interested in how the human mind distinguishes grammatical from non- grammatical structures, systemic functional



linguists are interested in how people use language to communicate. It is about language in use where the purpose, situation, setting, audience and cultural assumptions create context in the speakers' mind. It does not only deal with how people use language but also looks at how language is structured for use, which is constrained by the social context (Eggins, 1994).

## **2.4 Approaches to Grammar in Language Classroom**

The different views of approaches in analyzing and describing language have influenced the ways grammar are taught. Based on these different approaches, Woods (1995) derived three views of grammar; grammar as rules, grammar as forms and grammar as resource. These three views of grammar, to a large extent, inform teachers about their approaches to teaching grammar in a classroom.

### Grammar as rules

When learning grammar is viewed as learning the rules of grammar, learners are expected to have the knowledge of grammar. This knowledge will act as the generative base to express ideas and events that happened in the present, past and future. The rules define how word forms are composed and used. But how these rules are transferred to actual use become an issue among researchers and educators when they compare a child who speaks her own language successfully without learning the rules.